

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-19 (canceled)

Claim 20 (previously presented): An isolated DNA expression construct comprising a DNA sequence represented by a general formula selected from the group consisting of:

$p/o - (A)_n - R_y$, and

$p/o - R_y - (A)_n$

wherein

i) p/o is a *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subsp. *lactis* promoter that is SEQ ID NO: 9,

ii) A is a heterologous gene encoding a polypeptide of interest; and

iii) R is a gene encoding the *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subsp. *lactis* lac repressor protein that is SEQ ID NO: 2;

and wherein n denotes an integer ≥ 1 and y denotes 0 or 1.

Claim 21 (previously presented): The DNA expression construct according to claim 20 wherein y is 1.

Claim 22 (currently amended): The DNA expression construct according to claim 20 wherein the reading frame of the gene coding for the lac repressor is ~~reserved~~reversed relative to the region p/o.

Claim 23 (currently amended): The DNA expression construct according to claim 20 wherein the gene coding for a polypeptide of interest is selected from the group consisting of genes encoding enzymes, and cell surface proteins, ~~and functional peptides~~.

Claim 24 (previously presented): The DNA expression construct according to claim 23 wherein the gene coding for the polypeptide of interest is selected from the group consisting of genes coding for dextranucrase, glycosyltransferase, phytase, transglutaminase, peptidase,